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A

LETTER

TO THE

GENTLEMEN of the ARMY.



L O N D O N :

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BETTER

TO THE



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A

LETTER

TO THE

GENTLEMEN of the ARMY.

I Write this letter to such of my brother officers only as are capable of reflection. Let those whose wit and knowledge extend not beyond a bottle and a wh—e, lay down the pamphlet and proceed no farther ; for they will find in it no obscenity, and, consequently, no entertainment. Besides, they may probably see themselves treated with more familiarity than will be agreeable to *men of honour* :—*all men that wear scarlet are men of honour*. Some of the queer ancients indeed give a different definition of honour.—*Honor est testimonium excellentiæ quæ est in homine, sed maxime*

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secundum virtutem, says one of them.; and another calls it the reward of virtue, *præmium virtutis*; but these poor old philosophers knew very little of the polite world, or they would have talked in a different manner. If they had been gentlemen, they would have told us, that *virtue* and *honour* are as diametrically opposite, as a red coat and a black one; that a man may be guilty of every crime that is not within the reach of the gallows, without sinning against the rules of *honour*; provided he has ill-nature enough to quarrel with his friend, and injustice enough to satisfy the illegal demands of a sharper, rather than pay his draper, or his lace-man, for those very things which constitute him a gentleman: for (among ourselves be it spoken) were those honest tradesmen, like the birds in the fable, to take it into their heads to strip us of our borrowed plumage, I am afraid that many an ungentleman-like jack-daw, would stand exposed to the laughter of the world. But to be serious. A man of honour is, in few words, a human creature (there is no necessity for his being a rational one) with a

cockade

cockade in his hat, and a sword on his thigh.
 Thus accouter'd, he is at full liberty to contract
 debts, which he knows himself incapable of dis-
 charging ; he may use every possible means to se-
 duce your wife, or debauch your daughter, whilst
 at the same time he is professing the most inviol-
 able friendship for you, and you are loading him
 with civilities ; he may lye as fast as he thinks
 proper, provided he dares run the man thro' the
 body who presumes to dispute his veracity ; he
 may blast the character of a virtuous woman by
 boasting of favours which he never received ;
 he may accept the King's commission and eat
 his bread, without ever endeavouring to qualify
 himself for the King's service ; he may drink,
 whore, swear, blaspheme, &c. &c. &c. and yet
 be reputed a man of honour, a brave soldier, and
 a damn'd honest fellow.

I have often wonder'd that a man of old *Nestor*
Ironside's sense should be so mistaken in his judg-
 ment as to say, that true honour, tho' it be

a different principle from religion, is that which produces the same effects. ' Religion, says he, ' embraces virtue, as it is enjoined by the laws of ' God ; honour, as it is graceful and ornamental ' to human nature. The religious man *fears*, the ' man of honour *scorns* to do an ill action. The ' latter considers vice as something that is beneath ' him, the former, as something that is offensive ' to the Divine Being. The one, as what is un- ' becoming, the other, as what is forbidden. Thus ' *Seneca* speaks in the natural and genuine language ' of honour, when he declares, that were there ' no God to see or punish vice, he would not com- ' mit it, because it is of so mean, so base, and so ' vile a nature.' He concludes with those lines from Mr. *Addison's Cato*.

Honour's a sacred tie, the law of kings,

The noble mind's distinguishing perfection,

That aids and strengthens virtue where it meets her,

And imitates her actions where she is not.

It ought not to be sported with——

This

This same old *Ironside* farther takes upon him to say, that ‘ true fortitude is indeed so becoming
 ‘ in human nature, that he who wants it scarce de-
 ‘ serves the name of a man ; but we find several
 ‘ who so much abuse this notion, that they place the
 ‘ whole idea of honour in a kind of brutal courage ;
 ‘ by which means we have had many among us
 ‘ who have called themselves men of honour,
 ‘ that would have been a disgrace to a gibbet.’

What a strange old prig must this have been, to treat so many honourable gentlemen with so little respect ? I verily believe he means to insinuate that a man ought rather to sin against *custom* than sin against his *Creator*. He must certainly have had very confin’d notions of the world, to reason in this absurd manner. I must confess, with regard to duelling, that our religion admits of no excuse for it ; but what have soldiers to do with religion ? There is indeed one very awkward circumstance in our laws, which obliges us to qualify ourselves for our commission by receiving the sacrament ; but I have seen so many gentlemen make a joke of this solemn act of religion, that it must certainly

be

be a matter of little consequence; indeed they were not men much famed for their wisdom; but they were nevertheless men of honour, and damn'd honest fellows.

Perhaps, some people may ask whether the running our antagonist thro' the body be any proof of the justice of our cause? Whether the matter in dispute is by this means 'at all determined? Whether we can be said to receive any satisfaction from the man who has injured us, by putting it in his power to stab us, or shoot us thro' the head? Whether we pretend to more bravery than the ancient *Greeks* or *Romans*, to whom duelling was entirely unknown? Whether duelling does not owe its origin to the times of ignorance? Whether all nations have not abolished it in proportion as they became more civilized? Whether those who have devoted themselves to the service of their king and country, have a right to expose their lives except in a public cause? Whether in putting on a red coat we resign'd our pretensions to
the

the title of rational creatures ! These and many more questions of the like nature it is true may be asked ; but we shall destroy every argument that might be thence concluded, by pleading the custom of the country in which we live. They may indeed, perchance, be impertinent enough to reply that had we once lived in the city of *Sodom*, we might have used the same argument in defence of a crime, that does more dishonour to human nature, than the whole tribe of vices put together.

Upon the whole, be it as it may, I am sure, at least, that no one can possibly give a more convincing proof of his courage than by fighting a duel ; for can any man be more daring than he, who has intrepidity enough to rush into the presence of an offended God, by the very means of a crime which must of necessity be of all others most displeasing to God. This is genuine courage ! this is true magnanimity ! Tell me no more of your *Alexanders*, your *Pompeys*, and your

Cæsars,

Cæsars. Shew me an ancient hero of them all, who if they had had the same knowledge of the Deity that we have, would have dared to damn themselves to eternity, rather than be thought a coward, perhaps by a foolish, rattling fellow, whose opinion in any other matter would be thought of no more weight than that of an idiot. But that our courage may appear in its true lustre, let us for argument's sake suppose ourselves christians, at least in belief, and, according to that system, follow our immortal duellist beyond the grave.—He has now entered the regions of eternity ; where, as christians believe, he must stand forth before his Creator, and give an account of all his actions. His eternal happiness or misery must depend upon the issue of this tryal. Now, with regard to the very last action of his life, as we cannot rationally suppose that an all-wise Being, will admit of *custom* or *fashion* as a plea for our hero's having arrogated to himself the power of putting an end to his own life, or that of his fellow creature, and by that means as it were interrupting the designs of Providence,

vidence, I am greatly afraid that he will find himself irrecoverably, and eternally lost. This, then, being a true state of the matter, who will dispute the amazing resolution of those, who dare to defend their honour at the expence of their future felicity? If this genuine heroism met with its desert, ought not every duellist to have a statue erected to his memory? But experience tells us, that the ungrateful world generally pay so little regard to a man's intrepidity on those occasions, that the very people who encouraged us to fight, are apt to look upon one who has run an honest fellow (for all men are honest fellows when they are dead) through the body, with a kind of contempt. A man who has drawn his sword more than once in defence of his honour, is looked upon as a quarrelsome ill-natured person, and is avoided as a dangerous companion. Ungrateful world!

I had wrote thus far of this letter, when I received an invitation from an old colonel, in the neighbourhood of the barrack where I now am. Tho'

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there

there is a very great disparity in our ages, I have too much regard to my own improvement, to let any opportunity slip of conversing with so sensible a man. I therefore mounted my horse, and obeyed his command. Having sat about an hour after dinner, 'I perceive, Sir, says the old gentleman, 'you are no great drinker, therefore, if it is agreeable to you, we'll walk out into the garden. I 'have nothing very curious to shew you; but, 'old as I am, I am fond of being in the open 'air as often as this unsettled climate of ours 'will permit.' I told him I had no objection to a walk, and we accordingly took our leaves of the ladies. 'You see, Sir, says the good old man, 'in what manner I am used to live. If this kind 'of entertainment suits you, I shall be glad of 'your company as often as you think proper. 'You must not expect that I shall press you to 'drink; for, tho' I am not more afraid of my 'wine, than the rest of our country gentlemen, 'yet I always thought it a mistaken piece of hospitality, to convince my guests of my generosity

at

' at

' at the expence of their health. I look upon
 ' wine as a medicine, when taken moderately ; but,
 ' like most other medicines, it becomes a poison
 ' if taken to excess. I act contrary to the custom
 ' of our island it is true ; but, as *Hamlet* says on
 ' the same subject, it is a *custom more honoured*
 ' *in the breach than the observance*. You will think
 ' me an odd kind of a man ; when I tell you
 ' that I never give any one an opportunity of be-
 ' ing drunk twice in my house. I cannot bear to
 ' see human nature sunk so much below the level
 ' of the brute creation. I had rather, much rather,
 ' herd with those swine (*pointing to some of those*
 ' *animals that were feeding in the yard*) than sit in
 ' company with a herd (they deserve no better
 ' name) of drunkards. I myself, Sir, have had
 ' the honour to serve my king and country, in a
 ' military capacity, for the space of forty-two years.
 ' I quitted the service because I thought myself in-
 ' capable of performing the duties of another cam-
 ' paign, with that vigour which is required in a
 ' commanding officer. Thus I have made room

' for men of more activity, and have the satisfac-
 ' tion to end my days in peace. Yet I retain
 ' my affection for the army, and always prefer the
 ' company of a soldier, to that of any other man,
 ' provided he behaves as a soldier ought to do :
 ' but really, Sir, the gentlemen of the army are in
 ' general so exceedingly debauched, and so igno-
 ' rant, even of their own profession, that it is
 ' rarely in my power to make company of them.
 ' A man, who happens to have a tolerable share
 ' of understanding, finds but little amusement in the
 ' company of men, who, in less than an hour after
 ' dinner, deprive themselves of their reason. In
 ' spite of all my philosophy, I have not patience
 ' enough to listen to the nonsense of a drunken
 ' company. I have no objection to a chearful
 ' glass ; but I cannot bear to see a man tun in
 ' more liquor than his head will carry. It is most
 ' astonishing that our officers will not reflect, that
 ' nothing injures their constitutions more than de-
 ' bauchery ; that no men upon earth have more
 ' reason to preserve their health, as there are no
 ' men

' men more exposed to bodily fatigues. Are
 ' any of them ignorant that a man of a bad habit
 ' of body, has but little hopes of recovering even
 ' of the slightest wound ? But there are other ef-
 ' fects of drunkenness, which one would imagine,
 ' were, alone, sufficient to deter them from it : I
 ' mean the foolish, groundless, disputes, and their
 ' fatal consequences, that so frequently owe their
 ' being, merely to immoderate drinking. How
 ' many a man has found himself obliged, by our
 ' modern laws of honour, to murder his friend, for
 ' having uttered a harsh word, when neither of
 ' them were in their senses !'

I was pleased to here the old colonel touch upon
 this subject ; and, that I might move him to pro-
 ceed, I told him that I thought he had used a
 very harsh word in accusing a man of murder,
 who drew his sword in defence of his honour.

' Honour, a fig ! replied the old gentleman in a
 ' passion ; I never knew an instance of a man of
 ' true

‘ true honour fighting a duel. *We strain at a
 ‘ gnat and swallow a camel.* No man of honour
 ‘ will, if he has been guilty of an imprudence
 ‘ with regard to his friend, refuse to beg his par-
 ‘ don ; and every man of honour should be con-
 ‘ tented with that satisfaction.’

But, Sir, I replied, suppose my antagonist should
 be so unreasonable as not to be satisfied with the
 confession of my fault, and should insist on my
 fighting him.

‘ Why then, Sir, says he, he must be a fool or
 ‘ a mad man ; and I should give him for answer,
 ‘ that I would not go out with a design to murder
 ‘ him ; but that I should walk out as usual, and
 ‘ if, when we happen’d to meet, he chose to draw
 ‘ his sword on me, I would endeavour to defend
 ‘ myself as I would from a mad dog, or any
 ‘ other enraged animal. If death should then be
 ‘ the consequence of our rencounter, I think I
 ‘ should have little to answer for, as self-prefer-
 vation

‘ vation seems to be an innate principle through-
 ‘ out the whole animal creation.’

‘ There are certain things, continued the co-
 ‘ lonel, called articles of war, which our duelling
 ‘ gentlemen seem entirely to have forgotten. If I
 ‘ remember right, it is there commanded, that no
 ‘ officer shall presume to challenge another, or to
 ‘ fight a duel; that all seconds, promoters, and
 ‘ carriers of challenges be deem’d as principles,
 ‘ and punished accordingly; it is also said, that
 ‘ whatever officer shall upbraid another for re-
 ‘ fusing a challenge shall himself be punished as a
 ‘ challenger; and that every officer shall be ac-
 ‘ quitted of any disgrace, or opinion to his disad-
 ‘ vantage, which might arise from his having re-
 ‘ fused to accept a challenge, as they or he shall
 ‘ only have acted in obedience to the king’s or-
 ‘ ders.’

‘ Such are the positive commands of his Majesty,
 ‘ to whom every man in the army has taken a

‘ solemn

' solemn oath of implicit obedience. Now I would
 ' ask, whether he who wilfully acts in direct opposi-
 ' tion to these commands, is not guilty of perjury ?
 ' And, is not he who is guilty of perjury a scoun-
 ' drel ? If this then be a true state of the case,
 ' what a *Don Quixote*-appearance do our duelling
 ' heroes make, who whilst they are fighting a man
 ' for having used the word scoundrel, are doing
 ' that which constitutes them really such ? The
 ' only plausible argument that I ever have heard
 ' used in defence of this knight-errantry, is, that it
 ' is often a means of preserving good manners, where
 ' we should run the risque of being continually
 ' insulted ; that many an insolent fellow is intimi-
 ' dated from behaving rudely to a gentleman, by
 ' the apprehension of a challenge. This may be
 ' true ; but I would answer, that a man who is
 ' kept in awe merely by our swords, is evidently a
 ' coward, and consequently a very unfit companion
 ' for a gentleman. Were men but more cautious
 ' how they chuse their intimates, and would drink
 ' moderately, duelling would soon grow out of
 ' fashion.

' fashion. In short, Sir, there are a thousand argu-
 ' ments that might be used against duelling, and
 ' not one that carries with it the least weight that
 ' could be produced in its favour. But the rea-
 ' son why it is continued in despite of all that can
 ' be said against it, is, that our fine gentlemen are
 ' in general a kind of animals so confined in their
 ' ideas, from a stupid negligence in their edu-
 ' cation, that the soundest reason, or most conclu-
 ' sive argument, has no more power on their
 ' weak understanding, than the whistling of the
 ' wind. All the answer you can expect to a seri-
 ' ous question is, *damn your reasons, give us your*
 ' *whore, and drink about.* This is deem'd a witty
 ' reply, a horse-laugh succeeds, and there's an
 ' end of your argument.

' These are the men who are intrusted with the
 ' defence of your nation's honour, your lives, your
 ' liberty, your every-thing! they imagine, that
 ' when they have learnt to salute gracefully, and

D

' advance

‘ advance their espontoons, &c. that they are com-
 ‘ pleat soldiers.’

A sudden shower of rain put a stop to the colonel’s harangue, and obliged us to retire into the house. We then join’d the family, and were not left again to ourselves till after supper. We supped in the old gentleman’s library, which contains at least a thousand volumes, chiefly military and historical. When the ladies had retired, ‘ *Thomas*, says the ‘ colonel, (speaking to his servant) you may bring ‘ me my pipe, this gentleman will excuse it, when ‘ I tell him, that I have not gone to bed this ‘ forty years without first smoaking a pipe.’ I told him that if he would permit it, I would bear him company; at which the old gentleman seemed very agreeably surprized, calling out with a loud voice, *Thomas, bring a couple, this honest gentleman smoaks tobacco.* ‘ Indeed, Sir, says he, you ‘ are much in the right on’t. It may not be a ‘ polite custom, but it is an excellent remedy a- ‘ gainst infection, and therefore of great use in
 ‘ camps.

‘ camps. I observed, when I was abroad, that
 ‘ the *Germans* and *Dutch* always lost fewer
 ‘ men by epidemical disorders than the *French*,
 ‘ which I believe was chiefly owing to the use of
 ‘ tobacco in the *German* and *Dutch* armies.’ We
 had no sooner filled, and sociably advanced our
 tubes, than the sage colonel thus began.

‘ Let me see—its now about two years since I
 ‘ had a strange kind of an adventure with a *man of*
 ‘ *honour*, who in consequence of having danced at
 ‘ an assembly with one of my daughters, did me
 ‘ the honour to visit me, from the very barracks
 ‘ in which you now live. The man seem’d to have
 ‘ had what is called a polite education, and tho’
 ‘ I found him extreamly ignorant, not only in the
 ‘ very rudiments of learning, but in every thing
 ‘ beyond the A, B, C of his profession; yet as
 ‘ he seem’d to entertain my girls, who naturally
 ‘ prefer’d a trifling companion to no company at all,
 ‘ I shewed him all the civility in my power, and
 ‘ gave him a general invitation to my house. He

' visited us twice a week, for the space of three
 ' months, and very frequently took a bed with
 ' us ; till one night, as I sat reading in this very
 ' room, my youngest daughter's maid-servant came,
 ' and told me, that she could not go to bed with-
 ' out informing me, that the captain had forced
 ' the key of her young mistress's chamber from
 ' her ; that he offered her five guineas, and bad
 ' her be silent if she would oblige her lady. I
 ' order'd her to go to bed, and leave the rest to
 ' me. I then retired into a room, which is separat-
 ' ed from my daughter's apartment only by a thin
 ' partition, where I had not sat above half an hour
 ' before the noble captain sallied forth in his shirt,
 ' and, having open'd the door, advanced to my
 ' daughter's bed. Tho' I had no reason to suspect
 ' the girl's virtue, yet as it was almost impossible
 ' to conceive how a man could have the impudence
 ' to make such an attempt, without some hopes of
 ' a favourable reception, I waited to hear what
 ' she would say : but I was soon alarm'd with the
 ' words, *Lord Almighty—good God—for hea-*
 ' *ven's*

' ven's sake——are you mad——help——help! I
 ' then rushed into the room with a candle in my
 ' hand, and found him half in bed. I seized the
 ' villain by his shirt, hurried him out of the room,
 ' and tumbled him down stairs; and there he re-
 ' main'd till I had called up a servant, who, by
 ' my orders, turned him out of doors, naked as he
 ' was. I bad them throw him his apparel out of
 ' window; and have never set eyes on him since.
 ' But what is more astonishing than all the rest,
 ' the rascal had the assurance to send me a chal-
 ' lenge; and indeed a very extraordinary one it
 ' was. Stay——I believe I can find it. You'll
 ' think it too great a curiosity to be lost.'

The old gentleman arose from his chair, and, after a short search, shew'd me the following letter:

S I R,

Your usd me scendelishly, a gantman of my
 profeshan is not to bee trated in such a manner,
 and so I expect settisfaction from

Your servt.

P. S. Menshon your time and wepen.

To

To this elegant epistle I sent him an answer to this effect.

S I R,

I Should not have thought it worth while to write you an answer, but that I am unwilling to expose you to your own servant. If my stable-boy spelt no better than your honour, I would turn him out of my service for a blockhead. Should you think proper to favour us with your company, you may depend on being soufed in my horse-pond.

‘ Thus ended our correspondence ; and thus
 ‘ you see that this man, so insensible to the sacred
 ‘ laws of hospitality, would have drawn his sword
 ‘ in defence of his honour. Strange, that man-
 ‘ kind should form such ridiculous notions of ho-
 ‘ nour, as to believe it can exist, separated from
 ‘ strict honesty ! yet I have known many a man,
 ‘ who upon the slightest provocation would have
 ‘ murdered his friend, in defence of his honour, but
 ‘ made

' made no scruple of running into every man's
 ' debt that would give him credit, tho' he knew it
 ' impossible that he should ever pay them. If
 ' we compare the conduct of those gentlemen with
 ' that of a highwayman, we shall find that the
 ' latter will suffer by the comparison. They not
 ' only, like him, take that to which they have no
 ' right, but are likewise guilty of a breach of
 ' trust, and of ingratitude : for we certainly owe some
 ' gratitude to the man who voluntarily reposes a
 ' confidence in us : how base, how mean, how un-
 ' generous, how unjust, is it, therefore, to contract
 ' debts which we have no prospect ever to dis-
 ' charge !

' But I think there is no vice in which we shew
 ' our want of common prudence, and of that deli-
 ' cacy which ought to be the characteristic of a
 ' gentlemen, as in that of whoring. For I main-
 ' tain it, that every man who risks his health
 ' for a moment's pleasure, deserves to be posted for
 ' a fool.

' I think there is one article of war, which
 ' commands all officers and soldiers, diligently to
 ' frequent Divine Service. By this we may con-
 ' clude, that our King expects we should not only
 ' be brave soldiers, but good men; and indeed, as
 ' to my own opinion, I rightly believe them to be
 ' inseparable from each other. I am confident,
 ' that it is impossible for a man, with a load of
 ' crimes upon his conscience, to behave with that
 ' coolness in time of action, which is necessary to
 ' the performance of his duty. We have now
 ' commenced a war, which, in all human pro-
 ' bability, will not end without great effusion of
 ' blood on both sides. I would have our young
 ' officers to believe me, when I assure them, that
 ' a battle is a very serious affair; that if they are
 ' not prepared to look death in the face, they
 ' will tremble in the face of an enemy. They
 ' will find their usual spirits fail them at a time
 ' when they stand in most need of them. I well
 ' remember to have seen some very daring, gay,
 ' sprightly men cut very despicable figures, where
 ' they

' they had the best opportunity in the world of
 ' shewing their courage. We must pay but little
 ' regard to those heroes, who at a distance talk of
 ' going to battle with as much indifference as they
 ' would sit down to breakfast. I am sure that
 ' every man who has seen action, unless he
 ' happens to be endowed with a brutal stupidity,
 ' must own that he had occasion for all his resolu-
 ' tion, his magnanimity, and presence of mind :
 ' and believe me, Sir, there is nothing that can
 ' assure us of these in so eminent a degree, as our
 ' own conscious integrity. It is impossible for a
 ' vicious man, be his system what it will, to find
 ' himself exposed to the fire of an enemy, without
 ' terrible apprehensions ; but I can easily conceive,
 ' that a religious man may say, with the high-
 ' priest in *Racine's* excellent tragedy of *Abthaliah*,

Je crains Dieu, cher Abner, et n'ai point d'autre crainte.

' Such a man, and only such, may stand unmoved
 ' amidst the greatest danger : or as *Horace* says

E

' Si

*Si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidum serient ruinae.*

‘ In short, Sir, instead of being the most de-
 ‘ bauched set of men, we have all the reason
 ‘ in the world to be the most religious; as we are
 ‘ of all others the most exposed to danger. With
 ‘ what spirit, and tranquility, does that man per-
 ‘ form his duty, whose virtues bid him hope for
 ‘ the protection of an Omnipotent Being; but
 ‘ who has nothing to fear from the worst that can
 ‘ befall him !

‘ You see, Sir, continued the colonel, I have not
 ‘ entirely forgot either the *French* or *Latin* poets.
 ‘ Indeed, to tell you the truth, my acquaintance
 ‘ with them did not end when I left school, as is
 ‘ often the case. I always found them the most
 ‘ chearful and entertaining companions in my
 ‘ hours of relaxation, and therefore have frequently
 ‘ preferred their company to that of my bacchana-
 ‘ lian

'lian mess-mates : and I still retain an affection for
 'them from a principle of gratitude ; for it is to
 'them I am partly indebted for my present good
 'state of health : nay, I may say, for life itself,
 'since there is not one of those now living, who
 'were my fellow subalterns in the same regiment ;
 'so destructive are the inevitable effects of debau-
 'chery !

'It is amazing that the gentlemen of the army
 'are, in general, so unpardonably illiterate, when
 'they have so much leisure for improvement. Were
 'they but acquainted with the pleasures of a
 'studious man, they would not be reduced to *kill*
 'time, (as they most properly term it) in the
 'shameful manner they generally do. They would
 'then find their hours and days too short rather
 'than a burthen to them : nay, I affirm from ex-
 'perience, that after a few hours of rational soli-
 'tude, they would even enjoy the pleasures of
 'society in a much higher degree than they do at
 'present. And how much better would they be

' qualified for society ? What an inexhaustible
 ' source of conversation would it afford them ? How
 ' much better would they be qualified to talk of
 ' things relating to their own profession ? And
 ' what entertaining, and instructive, companions
 ' might we expect to find in a set of men, who, to
 ' the great opportunity they have of knowing the
 ' world, would add that knowledge which can on-
 ' ly be acquired by reading ? Besides, I hold it
 ' impossible for a man to be a good officer who is
 ' not a good historian. Experience, it is true,
 ' may, in time, bring him acquainted with his
 ' duty ; but in all probability he will buy that ex-
 ' perience at the expence of his country. It is a
 ' common notion, that a young officer will have
 ' nothing to do, in his first campaigns, but im-
 ' plicitly to obey respective orders : but this is a
 ' very false notion ; for it frequently happens that
 ' a very young officer is sent, tho' with a small
 ' party of men, upon a command that may be
 ' of the last importance to the general plan ; and
 ' that, from an uncertainty of circumstances, his
 ' orders

' orders are in some degree discretionary. In
 ' this case, a young fellow, who, from ignorance
 ' in military history, is entirely unacquainted with
 ' the maxims and occurrences of war, will, in all
 ' likelihood, were it merely from a sense of his
 ' own ignorance, find himself in such perplexity,
 ' that he will lose the opportunity of executing
 ' that for which he was dispatched, merely through
 ' want of resolution. This reminds me of that
 ' unfortunate, yet glorious, battle of *Fantenoi*. I
 ' call it glorious, because certainly never plan was
 ' better laid, nor, in part, more heroically exe-
 ' cuted. I myself was present, and I have since
 ' frequently weighed every part of it relating to
 ' the general disposition; and I do affirm, that
 ' neither the great duke of *Marlborough*, nor any
 ' other commander ever display'd more general-
 ' ship than did the young Hero of that day. Had
 ' his commands been properly obey'd, we had
 ' gain'd more glory, and more advantage, than
 ' our nation ever knew. We should not only
 ' have put an immediate stop to the war; but

' we

'we should have had it in our power to have
 'tied the hands of the *French*, in such a manner,
 'as would have disabled them from behaving with
 'that insolence, which has occasioned our present
 'dispute. O God! excuse me, Sir; but I can-
 'not reflect with patience on the laurels that
 'were cruelly snatched from us by the evil
 'genius of those damned Frogs: but they have
 'been declining towards their ruin ever since—
 'a just judgment—a very just judgment. Indeed,
 'I am convinced the Duke was afraid of them;
 'for he had so ordered matters, that we should
 'have succeeded without their assistance, if we
 'had all of us done our duty. Had not one
 'of us, like Capt. *Bobadil*, been fascinated, what
 'a number of lives would have been saved, and
 'how compleatly should we have triumph'd! but
 'what rendered his conduct most inexcusable was,
 'that the expedition on which he was sent, was
 'not attended with half the danger that has been
 'imagined. But suppose even that his death had
 'been inevitable, would that have allowed him

' to hesitate a moment, when the fate of thou-
 ' sands depended on his obedience? If he had
 ' been a tolerable historian, he must have known,
 ' that there is often a necessity to sacrifice a small
 ' number of men for the preservation of the
 ' whole : or, if he had been a conscientious man,
 ' he would have valued his life, but in propor-
 ' tion as that of an individual to a whole army.
 ' A good man can never be a coward, when the
 ' fate of his country is depending. — O !
 ' how unjustly was our young general deprived
 ' of victory ! I say unjustly, for, I repeat it, his
 ' plan would have done honour to the wisest ge-
 ' neral of antiquity : yet all the world knows,
 ' that he had but very little experience. Is not
 ' this a proof, that books are, of themselves, suffi-
 ' cient to qualify a man for the command of an
 ' army ? I mean where there happens to be a
 ' great strength of genius : for we may say of a
 ' general, as of a poet — *nascitur non fit*. A
 ' whole century affords but a very small number
 ' of men, who, with all the advantages of edu-
 ' cation,

' cation, would possess the talents that should be
 ' united in the general of an army. As there
 ' is no charge of equal importance, so there is
 ' no employment that requires so great a degree
 ' of merit. But I am persuaded that no man
 ' is fit to be trusted with the command of a
 ' single company, who is not acquainted with
 ' history, and has made a study of his profession.
 ' We have, indeed, few books on military
 ' subjects in our own language: and the reason
 ' of it is, that the number of our reading
 ' officers is too inconsiderable to purchase as
 ' many copies as would pay the expence of print-
 ' ing. An author who would instruct our army,
 ' must do it at his own cost. But there are a
 ' very considerable number of valuable *French*
 ' books to be met with; which is a sufficient
 ' reason why every officer should make himself
 ' acquainted with that language:

——— *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.*

' There is yet another reason why we should
 ' learn *French*. I mean the possibility of being taken
 ' prisoner

‘ prisoner and carried into *France*, where our ig-
 ‘ norance of the language will add greatly to the
 ‘ misery of our captivity.

‘ It often happens that a captain, or even a
 ‘ subaltern, is sent with a party, on an expedition
 ‘ where he may have as much occasion to ex-
 ‘ ert his military skill, and policy, as if he had
 ‘ the command of an army. If he happens to
 ‘ be a man of reading, upon the least dilemma,
 ‘ he will immediately recollect, from history, some-
 ‘ thing parallel to his own situation, and will
 ‘ naturally pursue the wisest measures from the
 ‘ example of others. This experience, as I may
 ‘ call it, will give him confidence; and that con-
 ‘ fidence will shew itself in his countenance, which
 ‘ will have an inconceivable influence on the be-
 ‘ haviour of the people under his command. I
 ‘ said *experience*, because the fruit of experience
 ‘ grows from the recollection of what we ourselves
 ‘ have seen or done: now whether we profit from
 ‘ our own former actions, or from those of other,

' the effect is entirely the same. So that an
 ' historian, with a good memory, and a man of
 ' experience, are upon the same footing; except
 ' that the former has a much more extensive field
 ' for improvement: for a man's own actions, how
 ' much soever he may have been employ'd, will
 ' afford him very little matter for speculation;
 ' whereas, those who are well acquainted with
 ' history, have the deeds of all mankind, since the
 ' creation, to profit from,

I think it also highly necessary, that every gen-
 ' tleman in the army should understand the theory
 ' of fortification; for though they may never hap-
 ' pen to be employ'd as engineers, yet, in the
 ' progress of war, it is probable, in the attack,
 ' or defence of a town, they may be detach'd
 ' to secure, or surprize, some out-works at a
 ' distance from the main body. If in this case
 ' they are unfortunately ignorant of the terms used
 ' in, or constitution of, a fortification, it is ten to
 ' one, but they will mistake their orders; and,
 ' by

' by marching to a wrong part, or defending or
 ' attacking it improperly, frustrate the designs of
 ' their commander. Not that fortification, and
 ' gunnery, should be the chief study of an officer.
 ' Military history, and the memoirs of military
 ' men are the books that will make soldiers of
 ' them. But these are only to be met with in
 ' the *French* language. There are indeed some few
 ' in *German*, as also in *Italian*; but the number
 ' is inconsiderable.

' But come, Sir, (says the old gentleman) let
 ' us not entirely forget that we have a bottle be-
 ' fore us—here's the Duke and the army.'

We drank accordingly, and he then proceeded
 in the following manner.

' I have often wonder'd that our subalterns should,
 ' for their own sakes, leave the drilling of their
 ' men entirely to their non-commissioned officers.
 ' They are apt to look upon the *minutia* of the

' service as of too little consequence, without con-
 ' sidering that the men, by receiving all their in-
 ' structions from the serjeants, will naturally think
 ' their lieutenant and ensign to be little more than
 ' cyphers in the company. Besides, by frequently
 ' exercising the men of their own companies, they
 ' would not only improve their voices, but acquire
 ' a certain courage, and coolness in giving the word
 ' of command, which would effectually prevent the
 ' mistakes that but too frequently happen when a
 ' regiment is reviewed. The subalterns in the ser-
 ' vice of any of the *German* princes, are always
 ' charged with exercising the company, as soon as
 ' the men are capable of being thrown into squa-
 ' drons; and, that their prince may be assured
 ' that all his subalterns are properly qualified for
 ' this duty, before the time of exercising begins,
 ' which is early in the spring, those of the whole
 ' garrison are drawn up together, and obliged to
 ' perform the whole manual, firings, and evolu-
 ' tions, in the presence of their sovereign, or
 ' commanding officer. This I think is an excel-
 ' lent

' lent method ; for they are all of them qualified,
 ' not only to tell the men their duty, but to take a
 ' musquet on their shoulders, and shew them in what
 ' manner each motion is to be performed. If this
 ' be thought necessary in a service where every
 ' officer has carried a firelock for some time before
 ' he received his commission, how much more rea-
 ' son have not we to put it in practice, who receive
 ' our colours without knowing the least tittle of our
 ' duty. I must confess, our army is greatly im-
 ' proved in point of discipline ; for which we are
 ' obliged to the Duke : and indeed nothing less
 ' than a person of his Royal Highness's authority
 ' could ever have removed our prejudice in favour
 ' of our former licentiousness, which we erroneously
 ' called liberty. This reminds me of what *Boileau*
 ' has very happily expressed in, speaking of our
 ' passions,

*L'homme, en ses passions toujours errant sans guide,
 A besoin qu'on lui mette et le mors et la bride.
 Son pouvoir malheureux ne sert qu'à le gêner,
 Et pour le rendre libre il le faut enchaîner.*

' This

‘ This is strictly true of our army ; for if by
 ‘ our arms we would preserve our darling liberty,
 ‘ to render those arms formidable, we must submit
 ‘ to strict discipline.

‘ There is one thing in which we are yet ex-
 ‘ celled by the *Germans*, and that is, quick firing :
 ‘ but I make no doubt, that we shall soon equal
 ‘ them, since the introduction of this new method.
 ‘ At least, I am sure, it is the fault of our officers
 ‘ if we do not. Indeed, were I allowed to give
 ‘ my opinion, I should say, that neither the *Ger-*
 ‘ *mans*, nor we, are upon a right plan, with re-
 ‘ gard to our firing. We have imbibed a notion
 ‘ that our safety depends upon reserving the greatest
 ‘ part of our fire, and therefore we use our men
 ‘ to fire by single platoons. Thus the platoons
 ‘ of the third firing stand a considerable time with
 ‘ shoulder’d arms exposed to the enemies fire : and
 ‘ thus it happens that the men, growing impa-
 ‘ tient, frequently fire before their time, and by
 ‘ that

' that means at once destroy the regularity of the
 ' whole ; which might well be preserved even in the
 ' hottest engagement. I own it is absolutely neces-
 ' sary, that you should preserve your fire till you are
 ' near enough to do execution with every ball : but
 ' when you once begin, your chief endeavour
 ' should be to fire as many shot in as little time
 ' as possible ; and to maintain a constant succeß-
 ' sion of firing, so as that no part of your regi-
 ' ment remains a single moment inactive. This
 ' might be done by telling-off your battalion into
 ' four firings, and by making the whole of each to
 ' fire at the same time : for if the men are taught
 ' to load with any tolerable degree of expedition,
 ' those of the first firing will have loaded again,
 ' by the time that those of the fourth have dis-
 ' charged. I know that firing by firings, as it is
 ' called, is practised ; but at present it is but part
 ' of the firing exercise, and it is practised in such
 ' a manner, as to be of no use in time of action ;
 ' for in this part of the exercise, the major gives
 ' the word of command : now when you are once
 ' advanced

advanced near enough the enemy to fire at
 them, it is not to be supposed, that the major
 will advance far enough before the regiment
 to be distinctly heard; besides the usual din of
 war will effectually drown his voice; and for
 that reason, every officer is soon left to ma-
 nage his own platoon. A general confusion suc-
 ceeds, and every man endeavours to load and fire
 as fast as possible, without giving himself time to
 level, and for that reason not one shot in fifty is
 fired to any purpose. This I think might effec-
 tually be prevented, by dividing your battalion in-
 to sixteen platoons, and these platoons into four
 firings, always making the platoons of each firing
 to discharge at the same time. I say always, for
 I think we are very wrong in practising any kind
 of firing that is not of use in time of action;
 for by multiplying the manner of firing, you ren-
 der that essential part of the exercise too intri-
 cate, and consequently too liable to mistake.
 The firing by single platoons is certainly ex-
 tremely dangerous; for suppose you suffer your
 enemy

' enemy to advance within sixty paces, they will
 ' inevitably be upon you, before half of your regi-
 ' ment has discharged : whereas, if you pursue this
 ' method, they will, at least, have received one
 ' entire round before you meet, and a considerable
 ' part of your battalion will be ready to give them
 ' a second. For this reason I think it would be
 ' better to use your people to continue a constant
 ' succession of firing, in the manner I have men-
 ' tioned, from one preparative, till they are com-
 ' manded to cease. At a review, that the four
 ' platoons of the first firing might fire at the
 ' same instant, it might be done as usual, by
 ' word of command, given by the commanding
 ' officer ; but at other times, and particularly
 ' in time of action, each officer should give the
 ' words *present, fire*, to his own platoon, as is now
 ' practised in platoon-firing ; but with this diffe-
 ' rence, that the four platoons of the first firing
 ' should present and fire at the same time, and so
 ' the rest. I know they would not fire exactly to-
 ' gether ; but of what consequence would that be ?

G The

' The grenadiers, instead of being the first of
 ' the third firing, should fire between each round
 ' of the battalion, which would not only keep them
 ' employ'd, but would give the four platoons of
 ' each firing sufficient time to charge. I assure you,
 ' Sir, (continued the colonel) I have ever made
 ' the service my study; even since I took my
 ' leave of the army, my speculations have been
 ' chiefly military; and I am fully convinced, for
 ' the reasons I have mentioned, that this method
 ' of firing would prove the most effectual. I re-
 ' peat it, our present method of platoon-firing
 ' is extremely dangerous. According to the sy-
 ' stem now in being, we are to reserve our fire till
 ' the enemy is advanced very near us, and then we
 ' are to fire no more than a single platoon at a
 ' time, till the whole battalion has fired through.
 ' Now I maintain it, that it is in the power of your
 ' enemy to be upon you, before one third of your
 ' men have discharged; for the fire of a few single
 ' platoons will not much retard their progress. As
 ' to the fear of being left defenceless, by discharg-
 ' ing

'ing too many platoons at a time, it has no foun-
 'dation but in idea ; for provided your officers are
 'but tolerably careful to see that their men level
 'justly, if you do not entirely disperse the regi-
 'ment opposed to you, you will, at least, so stagger
 'them, that they will give you sufficient time to
 'be all loaded again : parting with your fire too
 'soon is extremely bad ; but, surely, not parting
 'with it at all, must be worse.'

When I sat down to write this letter, I did not
 intend to have made the least mention of our
 exercise, or discipline. The Colonel's opinion
 concerning our firings was quite foreign to my de-
 sign ; but, as it appeared to me to be the most
 interesting part of his discourse, I could not resist
 the temptation ; particularly as I think his objec-
 tions well grounded, and his reasonings clear. It
 were ridiculous to imagine, that our exercise should
 be varied according to the schemes of every mili-
 tary author ; but it would be equally absurd to
 suppose that the Prince by whom we are com-

manded will ever be displeased with an officer for endeavouring to improve an art, which is certainly not yet arrived at its meridian. We have to deal with an enemy, whose officers have long considered their profession as a science: their books upon military subjects are without number, whilst we have not a single volume to boast of, except *Bland's* military discipline.

The Colonel after a silence of a few minutes, resumed his subject, to the following effect,—
 ‘ Pray Sir, did you ever see any of the *German*
 ‘ troops ?’ Having answered him in the affirmative ;
 ‘ I must confess, says he, that the first time I saw
 ‘ the *Prussians*, I was greatly astonished. They
 ‘ made me start at every motion. But I was
 ‘ pleased with nothing so much as to see their
 ‘ officers so extremely accurate in performing *their*
 ‘ part of the exercise. Whenever they faced, ad-
 ‘ vanced, or planted their espontoons, it appeared
 ‘ like the motion of one man. This I never did,
 ‘ and, I am afraid, never shall see, in our service.

‘ How

' How strange soever it may seem, the chief blun-
 ' ders, and inaccuracies in our exercise, are gene-
 ' rally committed by our officers. We endeavour
 ' to exculpate ourselves by pleading the insignificance
 ' of our mistakes; alleging, that our facing toge-
 ' ther, on our right or left heels, can be of little
 ' importance to the service. I must beg leave to
 ' say, that this is a very erroneous method of rea-
 ' soning. Surely no officer will pretend to deny
 ' that, in performing our motions together, we add
 ' greatly to the beauty of our exercise. Now, I
 ' do affirm, that, where this consideration does not
 ' interfere with our principal design, it is by all
 ' means to be attended to. Besides, one would
 ' imagine, that men of any ambition would scorn
 ' to be deficient in the very rudiments of their
 ' profession; especially when so small a degree of
 ' attention would secure them from the possibility
 ' of a mistake. The reason why we are so far
 ' excelled by the *Germans* in this respect, is ex-
 ' tremely obvious. It is the practice of that ser-
 ' vice for every young man who aims at a com-
 mission,

' mission, even tho' he were of the first nobility,
 ' to do the duty of a private centinal, for some
 ' months at least, in the character of cadet. He
 ' is thence advanced to the rank of corporal,
 ' serjeant, and so to his colours. Thus it happens,
 ' that they are well acquainted with the duties of an
 ' ensign before they are honoured with the commis-
 ' sion; and thence it very naturally follows, that
 ' their regiments are liable to none of those mis-
 ' takes which have always been the disgrace of the
 ' *English* army. I do not by any means pretend to
 ' advise my superiors, but I must own, I think it
 ' would be no disgrace to an *Englishman* to begin at
 ' the very lowest degree of the scale. I confess
 ' that it is possible for an ensign, who will apply,
 ' in a year's time to know as much of his duty as
 ' if he had gone thro' all the several inferior de-
 ' grees; but to what a variety of errors is he not
 ' exposed during that year? How often is he not
 ' obliged to betray his ignorance in trifles that have
 ' long been familiar to the most stupid among his
 ' inferiors? How few of our subalterns are there,
 ' who

' who are capable of correcting a serjeant, or corporal, or of pointing out to them their proper posts
 ' in a battalion, in case they happen to mistake it?
 ' which could never be supposed, provided they,
 ' like the *Germans*, had served from the very bottom of the scale.'

Here the Colonel paused; which gave me an opportunity to ask him if, in his retirement, he had not, for the good of the army, committed his thoughts to paper? — ' Why, Sir, says he, to tell you the truth, I have by me a pretty large collection of my own scrawl. The many books I have read, together with the experience I must naturally have had in so many years service, cannot but have furnished me with sufficient matter, which if properly digested could not fail of being instructive, at least to the juvenile part of our army; and, perhaps, might be more acceptable, as we have scarce a military book in our language.'

' The

The old gentleman rose from his chair and took
 down a large folio manuscript.—‘ This, Sir,
 ‘ says he, is a kind of military dictionary, or com-
 ‘ mon-place book. in which, for these twenty
 ‘ years past, I have entered my thoughts, on mi-
 ‘ litary subjects, as they occurred to me. It is also
 ‘ my constant companion when I am reading military
 ‘ authors. When I meet with any thing new or
 ‘ striking in them, I either abbreviate or extend the
 ‘ article, as I think it requires. It was at first in-
 ‘ tended entirely for my own use, and improve-
 ‘ ment; but I own to you I have since thought
 ‘ something of giving it to the world. I first in-
 ‘ tended to have thrown it into a regular system of
 ‘ the art of war; but I have since considered, that
 ‘ the very title of a *regular system* would be suffi-
 ‘ cient to terrify many a man of honour from at-
 ‘ tempting it. For that reason, I believe it will
 ‘ be best to publish it in the alphabetical order in
 ‘ which you now see it. To the best of my know-
 ‘ ledge, it contains every thing relating to the

‘ ex-

' executive part of the service; and I think will
 ' be found to be a pretty comprehensive travelling
 ' library for a young officer. If, in the course
 ' of their duty, they have any doubts concern-
 ' ing the manner in which it ought to be per-
 ' formed, by turning to the word they will
 ' find, not only the best intelligence I have been
 ' able to gather, but, very frequently, the rea-
 ' son why it is so, and not otherwise; as also
 ' the different practice of other nations. You
 ' see it is, likewise, etymological, and, I hope,
 ' more justly so than the *famous* Mr. *Johnson's*
 ' *grand* dictionary. It is astonishing to me,
 ' that a man so entirely ignorant of the very
 ' language from which ours is chiefly derived,
 ' should attempt to write an *English* etymologi-
 ' cal dictionary. — You will also find, un-
 ' der their proper heads, as much of gunnery,
 ' and fortification, as will be necessary for those
 ' who are not immediately employed as engi-
 ' neers. But come, Sir, though in my own
 ' house, I must remind you of the hour. I

(50)

' expect you'll walk with me early in the morn-
' ing, therefore, if you please, we'll to bed.'

I made the colonel promise, soon to deliver
his manuscript to the press, wished him a good
night, and retired,

F I N I S.

